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After the performance he stood, evidently listening for a reply; none came, and, without another note, he disappeared, to be seen no more.

The partridge is about one-half the size of our grouse, and resembles it in plumage and style of flight. It seems a little strange that the time of incubation should be four weeks, while the grouse and the domestic hen sit only three weeks. A nest that I found in Iowa in 1874—on the ground—seemed rather small and too deep, the sixteen eggs being piled one upon another for three layers, at least. I was told that they were all sure to hatch.

Our eastern partridge are plump, fine-looking birds, but there are two varieties in California, the “mountain” and the “valley partridge,” more beautiful than ours.

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## EDITORIAL.

EDITORS, E. D. COPE AND J. S. KINGSLEY.

FICTION and the newspapers form the staple of the reading of the American people. Serious books which treat of matters of fact have fewer readers; and exact or scientific books fewer still. In the estimation of some people this is an unfavorable state of affairs, and speaks ill for our intellectual condition. We take a somewhat different view of it. The newspapers treat mainly of matters of fact, and they are only worthy of complaint when they give undue prominence to trivial matters, and to the evil that men do, and not enough to those events which make for human development and progress. This criticism may be justly applied to many newspapers. Also there is fiction and fiction. A class of French fiction, which has imitators in other countries, on pretence of being “realistic,” is evil and only evil, and should be, in our estimation, like the “Kreutzer Sonata” of Tolstoi, excluded from the mails. But much fiction is instructive, both in the facts of human character and in those of nature, and is of great utility as conveying much truth, sugar-coated, to the unsuspecting reader. Besides, were fiction abolished the number

of readers would be greatly diminished. Fiction, in fact, is the pioneer of the intellectual life, and many persons, more's the pity, never get beyond it. Without it, they would never get so far. But many readers of fiction do better. Interest in a thousand subjects is suggested, especially history, biography, geography, metaphysics, social science, and what not. Some who begin by scoffing at science remain to pray at her shrine. And it is quite possible that society will ere long have a surfeit of fiction. Froth and sponge serve as an inflator of the mental stomach for a time, but they are apt to generate a taste for something more solid as time passes on. In fact, mankind at large will, ere long, begin to suspect that the raw material of reality out of which the frail structures of fiction are built, must be of as much interest as are its products. On a little inspection they will find that truth is really stranger than fiction, as has been often said, and that there is an inexhaustible supply of it. From being readers of Balzac and Zola, they will become subscribers to and readers of the AMERICAN NATURALIST.

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#### RECENT BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS.

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BECKER, G. F.—Silicic Acids. Ext. *Am. Jour. Sci.*, Vol. XXXVIII., 1889. From the author.

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